

In the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 1 to 17, with a replacement paragraph amended as follows:

For flow-technical reasons, e.g. to increase the operating efficiency of the vacuum cleaner by minimizing the air flow resistance, vacuum cleaner designs strive to provide the largest possible cross-sectional area of the exhaust channel and especially the exhaust outlet openings in ~~the area of~~ the housing of the vacuum cleaner, in order thereby to thereby achieve a small exhaust air flow resistance. However, contrary to these requirements, it is also desired to reduce the noise emissions as discussed above, which could be achieved by providing a relatively large air flow resistance. Thus, these two requirements, of efficient operation through a reduced flow resistance on the one hand, and reduced noise emissions through an increased flow resistance on the other hand, are directly opposed to each other.

Please replace the paragraph at page 3, lines 18 to 24, with a replacement paragraph amended as follows:

European Patent Publication EP 0,706,774 B discloses an attempt to improve on the above mentioned relationship or balancing between the two opposite goals. Particularly, this European Patent Publication suggests to increase the outlet cross-sectional area through corresponding covered openings in the form of slots in the side walls of the housing of the vacuum cleaner in the manner of a protective shroud.